

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 022220Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6874

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 1697

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, NU

SUBJECT: SOFTER SOMOZA LINE REVEALED

SUMMARY: VICE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT MUNIZ OTERO HAS TOLD POLOFF THAT PRESIDENT SOMOZA ADOPTED A Milder LINE TOWARD HIS PRINCIPAL ANTAGONIST PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO SEVERAL WEEKS AGO. MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT MORA HAD BEEN THE PRINCIPAL PROPONENT OF THE NEW POLICY AND HAS BEEN REWARDED BY SOMOZA WITH A BOOST TO HIS PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS.

1. VICE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT ADOLFO MUNIZ OTERO CONFIDED TO POLOFF APRIL 28 THAT PRESIDENT SOMOZA HAD CHOSEN TO PURSUE A SOFTER AND MORE RATIONAL DOMESTIC POLITICAL LINE IN MID-MARCH. THE ESSENCE OF THE NEW LINE IS TO MINIMIZE THE AMOUNT OF PERSONAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN SOMOZA AND LA PRENSA EDITOR PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO. MUNIZ SAID THAT CHAMORRO HAD PROVOKED SOMOZA SEVERAL TIMES DURING THIS PERIOD, BUT SOMOZA HAD REFUSED TO BE BAITED INTO FURTHER ACTION AGAINST HIM. SOMOZA HAD ALSO DECIDED TO CURTAIL THE SCOPE AND THEREBY THE TERM OF THE MILITARY TRIBUNAL INVESTIGATING THE LOS ROBLES AFFAIR. THE OPERATION OF THE TRIBUNAL HAD BEEN LINKED TO THE PROLONGATION OF THE STATE OF SEIGE. CONFIDENTIAL

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WHICH MUNIZ ADMITTED HAD THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF MUZZLING LA PRENSA.

2. MUNIZ ASSERTED THAT MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT J. ANTONIO MORA WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN CONVINCING SOMOZA TO TAKE A MORE DISPASSIONATE POLICY TOWARD CHAMORRO. MUNIZ WAS WITH MORA ON TWO OCCASIONS WHEN HE ARGUED THAT SOMOZA MUST SEPARATE HIS PERSONAL ANIMUS TOWARDS CHAMORRO FROM HIS OBJECTIVE POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITIES. MORA CLAIMED THAT SOMOZA WAS DAMAGING HIS OWN REPUTATION AND THAT OF THE GOVERNMENT THROUGH WHAT HE SAID MANY PEOPLE VIEWED AS A PERSONAL VENDETTA. MUNIZ SAID THAT SOMOZA FINALLY ACCEPTED THE ARGUMENT.

3. MUNIZ BELIEVED THAT SOMOZA IS PLEASED WITH THE WAY THE NEW POLICY IS WORKING AND THAT MORA'S STOCK WITH THE PRESIDENT HAS SCORED THEREBY. ON APRIL 25 SOMOZA POINTEDLY IGNORED PRESENT MINISTER OF EDUCATION LEANDRO MARIN IN A SPEECH DEDICATING A VOCATIONAL SCHOOL PROGRAM AND INSTEAD SINGLED OUT FORMER EDUCATION MINISTER MORA FOR PRAISE. MUNIZ SAID THAT MANY WERE INTERPRETING THIS UNUSUAL ACTION AS A DELIBERATE SOMOZA BOOST TO MORA AS HIS SUCCESSOR.

4. COMMENT: MANY, INCLUDING THE EMBASSY, HAD WONDERED ABOUT SOMOZA'S ALMOST OBSESSIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH CHAMORRO FOLLOWING THE LOS ROBLES ATTACK WHICH HAD THE PERVERSE EFFECT OF ENHANCING CHAMORRO'S POLITICAL STANDING WHILE DAMAGING SOMOZA'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE. A MORE BENIGN POLICY SUITS SOMOZA BETTER AND IF MORA CONVINCED HIM, HE HAS SERVED HIS CHIEF WELL. ALTHOUGH CHAMORRO AND UDEL HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO CARRY OUT LEGITIMATE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES WITH A SURPRISING DEGREE OF LIBERTY IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, CHAMORRO HAS STILL NOT BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN A PASSPORT, AND CENSORSHIP, WHILE GREATLY ATTENUATED, PERSISTS.
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